

WASHINGTON, DC -Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today praised the inclusion of \$438 million in conservation funding for the Chesapeake Bay in the Farm Bill Conference Report that passed the U.S. House today with strong bipartisan support (318 to 106). The Farm Bill reauthorizes national agriculture policy and nutrition programs for the next five years. The funding for the Bay is a 10-year investment.

"I am particularly pleased that the Farm Bill includes \$438 million in direct assistance over the next ten years to help our farmers in their ongoing efforts to be good stewards of the Chesapeake Bay," **stated Congressman Hoyer.** "While we have been able to make some strides in our efforts to restore this magnificent estuary, it is clear that there is much work to be done."

Recently, the University of Maryland Center for Environment Science issued a report card which rated the Bay's health a C-minus. Ironically, this slight improvement over the previous year was largely due to drought conditions that limited nutrient and sediment runoff into the Bay. The funds included in the Farm Bill will help farmers throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed control erosion and reduce sediment and nutrient levels, which will in turn help enhance, restore, and conserve this ecologically significant habitat. The legislation also directs the Secretary of Agriculture to give special consideration to producers in specific, targeted river watersheds, including those of the Potomac and the Patuxent.

"Our concerted effort to restore these significant tributaries will go a long way to bolstering the health of the great body of water into which they all empty - the Chesapeake Bay," **stated Rep. Hoyer.**

"The conservation investment for the Bay included in the Farm Bill will go a long way in advancing our restoration goals."

The bill also establishes a pilot program to implement Enhanced Use Lease Authority at the National Agricultural Library and the nation's flagship agricultural research facility - the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). The program authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture to lease unused property of BARC or the Library for the purpose of generating additional resources to drive research and maintain the facilities. Through this program, they will continue to serve at the forefront of agricultural research and discovery, while forming new partnerships on location with public and private institutions.

One of the Farm Bill's most notable provisions is an unprecedented investment in nutrition that will ease the strain of rising food costs for millions of America's most vulnerable children and families. Overall, nutrition will see a \$10.3 billion boost that will benefit initiatives such as the Food Stamp Program and the USDA Snack Program, which provide targeted nutrition assistance to low-income children and parents. The necessity for strengthening the Food Stamp Program is demonstrated in Maryland - where participation in the Food Stamp Program has grown 41 percent since the last farm bill in 2003.

"It is most unacceptable that in the wealthiest nation on the planet, so many families are struggling with rising food costs," **stated Rep. Hoyer.** "This Farm Bill takes great measure to address the nutritional needs of disadvantaged children, struggling working families and seniors in our communities."

The new Farm Bill also promotes energy independence by investing \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources, including \$320 million in loan guarantees for biorefineries that produce advanced biofuels and a new program to encourage the production of new biomass for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production.

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